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4 Sept 80

## REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

### OTTAWA AND RIDEAU RIVER CORRIDORS

#### INTRODUCTION

The report on the Ottawa and Rideau River Corridors consists of five elements:

- 1) This Overview
- 2) Responses to Issues Raised at River Corridor Public Hearings (5 Volumes) for information
- 3) Official Plan Amendment No. 20
- 4) Operational Policies
- 5) Land Acquisition and Management Policies

#### OVERVIEW

##### Why the Study

The official plan for Ottawa-Carleton adopted in October 1974 recognized that the Rideau and Ottawa Rivers and the lands adjacent to them were of special significance and required detailed study.

The basic purpose of the river corridors study as stated in the Regional Plan is:

"to develop a series of policies and land use recommendations which will maximize the recreational, aesthetic and historic assets of the rivers and the related shoreline for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public while at the same time identifying areas where new development may be permitted which will not hinder achieving the above-noted objectives".

##### Objectives

During the early stages of the study, the above general statement was re-expressed in the form of four primary and two supportive objectives (with the latter two being considered as fundamental prerequisites to achieving the primary objectives).

##### Primary Objectives:

###### Recreation

To provide a range of suitable recreational opportunities including the maintenance or improvement of those now existing and to further develop the recreational potential of the river corridors.



### Conservation

To conserve those natural areas that are of significance from a fish, wildlife, botanical or geological standpoint.

### Heritage

To protect, interpret and restore elements that depict the heritage of the waterways.

### Aesthetics

To maintain and improve the scenic value of the river corridors by conserving elements that form important components of the landscape and by preventing actions that would have a deleterious effect.

### Supportive Objectives:

#### Water Conditions

To ensure that suitable water conditions are attained in order to help achieve the primary objectives.

#### Control over Development

To ensure a suitable location, type, density, layout and appearance of new development which supports the achievement of the primary objectives.

It is difficult to fully satisfy the above objectives because of the different interests that exist (e.g. rural residents, urban residents, different types of recreation interests, development interests) and the final recommendations represent a compromise position which nevertheless in large measure fulfills the original objectives.

### Highlights of the Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Land Designations (Amendment No. 20 to the Regional Official Plan):

- The same policy designations are applied in the river corridors as already exist in the Regional Official Plan but having regard for the recreation and aesthetic objectives for the river corridors in particular, modifications are made to the uses permitted in the corridors. In certain locations however, new policy designations specific to the river corridors are required. Examples of the above are that Marginal Resource Area policies are modified to become Marginal Resource Area (River Corridor) and a new category "Waterfront Open Space" is created.
- A system of scenic routes is proposed to be designated along the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers.
- Site planning guidelines are proposed to apply to the river corridors in the rural area and within a quarter mile of the scenic routes. The intent of these guidelines is to permit new development while at the same time preserve and enhance the attractiveness of the landscape.



- A policy is included that where subdivision takes place at the shoreline the dedicated public lands should wherever possible be located to provide waterfront access.

#### Operational Policies

Operational policies are actions, operations or procedures to be undertaken or followed primarily by governments and their agencies (e.g. procedures relating to water level control) as opposed to land designation or land acquisition. These policies consist of both those Council itself will follow and those it will request be undertaken by other agencies. They are grouped under the following headings:

- . recreation,
- . water conditions,
- . heritage,
- . implementation.

Key recommendations (in summary form) are:

- continuing actions to clean up the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers;
- implementing a comprehensive weed control program for the Rideau River;
- developing an action program for protecting, restoring and interpreting the heritage structures and sites along the waterways;
- the Region should continue to work to obtain commitment of the other levels of government to those recommendations which it itself does not have the authority to implement.

#### Land Acquisition and Management

Surveys undertaken by the provincial government and reaction from the public indicate a shortage of clean beaches, of facilities for boat launching and docking, and of water access areas generally.

Relative to the size of its population, Ottawa-Carleton rates very badly compared to the rest of southern Ontario with regard to the provision of bathing beaches and facilities for boat launching and mooring.

Key recommendations (in summary form) are:

- Fourteen areas totalling 453 hectares (1124 acres) are recommended for acquisition at an estimated cost of \$5,900,000 in order to provide for increased opportunities for water recreation (notably swimming, boat launching and water access generally).
- The Regional Municipality must determine in conjunction with other agencies respective roles with regard to land acquisition, development and maintenance and should be prepared to become financially involved in increasing opportunities for water oriented recreation for regional residents.



### Issues Raised in the Public Participation Program

1. There were no objections to the general principle of the land designation system proposed. However a limited number of submissions dealt with the question of changes to the designation of specific pieces of property.
2. There were no objections to the general principle of designating scenic routes nor to the specific routes proposed.
3. The proposed site planning guidelines were criticised on two grounds:
  - (i) they were an infringement on the rights of area municipalities
  - (ii) they would cause undue hardship to owners

Since the proposed guidelines would be administered by the area municipalities except where the Region had been given specific authority, i.e. plan of subdivision approval, the responsibility would remain at the local level. It is unlikely that hardship would be caused to individuals in the sense that building permits would be refused since the intent would be to create new lots in such a fashion as to ensure building permits could be issued and where lots have already been created the intention would be to locate the building in the best possible location, but not to insist on total compliance with the guidelines.

There are distinct advantages of the site control guidelines;

- (i) they provide flexibility since the lot size can be adjusted depending on the characteristics of the terrain. They were originally developed to meet an objection from the public that the proposed 25 acres minimum lot size (1978 proposal) was too rigid.
  - (ii) they allow for site improvement (landscaping) so that development may proceed when site control guidelines would subsequently be met.
  - (iii) they protect the visual quality of the river corridors and scenic routes, and thus are consistent with the basic purpose of the river corridor study as stated in the Official Plan.
4. It was suggested Ontario Hydro should not be given special status at their Chats Falls site by being recognised as a Special Policy Area. The February 1980 proposals and the proposed Official Plan Amendment 20 do not give Ontario Hydro special status.
5. It was suggested that infilling should be permitted. The Feb 1980 proposals and the proposed Official Plan Amendment 20 permit infilling to take place under certain conditions subject to the identification of infilling areas by area municipalities in local official plans and zoning bylaws.
6. It was suggested water front subdivisions be permitted in three specific locations. The proposed Official Plan Amendment No.20 does not specifically provide for the three subdivisions, Whitehorse Piers, Barnhart, and Campeau. The position taken is that the general principles of the plan as it pertains to the rural area should apply to the river



corridor lands and that it should not be easier to develop in the river corridor or, if permitted, development should not be to lower standards. Since these subdivisions would probably not conform to the plan elsewhere in the rural area exceptions should not be made in these cases. Once the river corridor amendment is adopted the specific plans of subdivision should be dealt with in the light of the new policies.

7. It was suggested a more restrictive environmental area policy was required for publicly owned land having environmental value in the urban area. This has been accepted and a new designation and accompanying policies are proposed in Amendment 20.
8. It was suggested that minor boundary changes were required to the environmental areas at Shirleys Bay and Morris Island and these have been accepted. It was proposed that Petrie Island be designated Environmental Area rather than Special Policy Area. This is not being recommended since the ultimate recreational potential for the area has yet to be investigated with the Township of Cumberland. However the text of Amendment 20 recognises the environmental potential of the island and surrounding water area.
9. It was suggested that the hazard land designation in so far as it affected the flood plain in the urban area should be withdrawn. This is not being recommended since there is a responsibility to identify and include policies on lands subject to flooding and this has been Council's policy since the adoption of the Regional Plan. However what is being recommended is that the term 'hazard land' be changed to 'environmental constraint area' and that a policy be included in the plan to make it clear that the policies of the plan are meant to affect new development, not existing development. It is hoped this will meet the concerns expressed on this matter. However the need for a review of all policies in this area is recognised and this review is being incorporated in the 1981 Work Program.
10. It was suggested that the special policy area designation on the Uplands Sand Pits should be removed. It had originally been hoped that this could have been done at this time. However public participation on a proposal being made by the City of Ottawa is not yet complete. As soon as specific proposals are agreed to, an amendment to this plan can be processed.
11. With the exception of Morris Island, Petrie Island, Uplands Sand Pits, Long Island Locks and part of the Osgoode middle window there were objections to the designation and subsequent acquisition of sites for recreation which are not now being used for recreation. There were no objections to the designation and policies towards existing recreation areas.

The main objections raised towards the designation and subsequent acquisition of sites for recreation came from adjacent property owners and was based on the following:

- i) the need has not been justified
- ii) particular sites selected are of poor quality
- iii) development of sites will result in disturbance to rural residents
- iv) sites closer to the urban area are more suitable.



These points and others are discussed more fully in the "Response to issues raised at the River Corridor Public Hearings". In summary:

- i) from the available information, statistics and observations provided through the public participation there is a need.
- ii) in any case the object is not to provide facilities to meet a perceived level of need but rather "to develop a series of policies and land use recommendations which will maximise the recreational, aesthetic and historic assets of the rivers and the related shoreline for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public...". In order to do this the sites with potential are identified, designated and are proposed to be acquired even though actual development may be many years away. When all sites proposed to be acquired are in public ownership the amount of shoreline outside the greenbelt in public ownership will rise from 6.8% to 13.7%.
- iii) all proposed sites have been subject to the same criteria regarding the wet and dry beaches and depth of water. All meet provincial guidelines.
- iv) when considering potential disturbance resulting from a recreational development it is important to distinguish between problems in the area itself (rowdy behaviour, garbage, vandalism) from problems which may spill over to adjacent areas. There is no history of problems spilling over to adjacent areas as far as can be determined from operators of existing facilities and adjacent landowners in Ottawa-Carleton. Potential problems within the recreation areas can be handled by law enforcement and security officers.
- v) while it is true that it may be desirable that sites close to the urban area be developed first, the mandate of the study was to "maximise the recreational, aesthetic and historic assets of the rivers..." see (ii) above. All areas with potential have therefore been identified and are recommended for designation and acquisition.

This issue more than any other has resulted in conflicting opinion during the public participation program. Whether or not areas are designated and subsequently acquired for future development as recreation areas goes to the heart of a river corridors policy. In its deliberations on the February 1980 proposals, the Planning Committee made initial recommendations concerning some of the properties that staff had proposed for acquisition. The same proposals as were made in February 1980 have been included again in the accompanying land acquisition and management report. The decision on these matters is clearly one of policy to be decided by Planning Committee and Council. Staff have discovered no factual or technical reason for altering the recommendations made in February 1980. There are few good opportunities for purchase by the public for waterfront recreational purposes. It is therefore important that each opportunity should be fully considered not just for itself but as part of the total of the limited waterfront recreational possibilities in the region.



12. It was suggested that the identification and designation of heritage structures should be an area of municipal responsibility. The policies being recommended recognize area municipal jurisdiction with regard to designation under the Ontario Heritage Act, but recognise also that Parks Canada, NCC and the Ministry of Culture and Recreation have a role to play in preparing and publishing an action program for protecting, restoring and interpreting heritage sites.
13. It was suggested that area municipalities should not have to open all road allowances to the water. The policies being recommended are phrased in such a way that area municipalities would be "requested to clear or otherwise open, unopened road allowances to provide foot access to the water...". The area municipal jurisdiction in this matter is recognised and presumably if there were overriding reasons the area municipality could refuse the request.
14. One of the suggestions in the 1978 report was that an administrative structure involving 3 levels of government, Federal, Provincial, and Regional should be set up to coordinate activities on the Ottawa River, and that the existing CORTS should be strengthened by the establishment of 3 subcommittees for the Rideau River. The agencies which would have been involved in this have rejected the idea mainly on the grounds that a new structure and increased administrative costs could not be justified at this time. The operational policies report is recommending that a more ad hoc arrangement be developed whereby interested agencies would form a committee to coordinate and monitor implementation. A more formal administrative mechanism is still regarded as an ultimate goal but it is hoped initial progress can be made by establishing the above committee.
15. It was suggested that the proposed designations on Morris Island restricted development to such a degree that the Region should purchase the whole island. Of the land in private ownership on Morris Island, approximately 40% is proposed to be designated Environmental area-class 1, due to the presence of a deer yard. Consistent with similar areas elsewhere development is restricted to one house on each existing lot, farming, forestry, recreation and conservation. The remaining 60% is proposed to be designated marginal resource area and marginal resource area (river corridor) where a variety of development is permitted. A recreation symbol is also shown which indicates interest in acquisition of a 93 hectare (230 acres) parcel for recreation. While not necessarily ruling out the possibility of acquiring the entire island, it should be noted that no where else has the Region purchased land because development has been restricted in some way.

Of the above points, No. 11 is the most crucial in determining the ultimate strength of regional policy towards the River Corridors.

#### CONCLUSION

The River Corridor Study is probably the most important policy undertaking concerning long term planning that Council has initiated since the completion of the Official Plan itself.



For the Rideau River it is also a document through which Council can give backing to the federal and provincial governments who have recognized the importance of this waterway and who in 1975 signed a bi-lateral agreement to co-ordinate planning and development of the whole Rideau-Trent-Severn system.

The need to initiate action now is important not only because of the length of time that will be required in order to achieve all the recommendations, but that the longer action is delayed the worse some of the problems will become and the more some opportunities will be lost.

Key matters that can be expected to become of increasing concern if action is delayed include:

- . an ability to secure suitable land for future recreation purposes<sup>1</sup> and
- . increasing pressure for building throughout the rural stretches of the corridors to the detriment of the natural landscape.

The river corridors are valuable resources but a long term commitment is needed if their potential is to be optimized. Because it is a long term commitment it must be recognized that some proposals may not be implemented for many years but in any long term plan there is nothing unusual in this. The present economic climate is not one that would have permitted the construction of the Ottawa River Parkway or the two provincial parks, yet over the years these and other undertakings have been accomplished and these are in fact more ambitious than most if not all of the proposals that are contained in this report. It would be unfortunate if short term exigencies were to dictate the nature of the long term commitment.

The proposals contained in the accompanying documents have taken into consideration most of the major points raised during the public participation and are consistent with the existing policies in the approved Official Plan. They are consistent with other policies in the rural area and they recognise and make more precise the regional interest in the river corridor.

#### RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the foregoing it is recommended that:

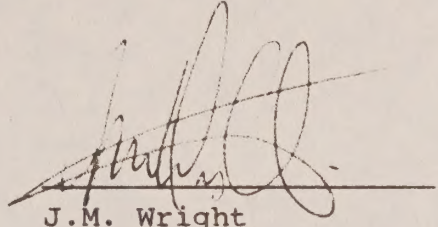
1. Regional Council adopt Official Plan Amendment 20
2. The proposed amendment hereafter referred to as amendment 20 to the Official Plan of the Ottawa-Carleton Planning Area, be adopted by bylaw and forwarded to the Minister of Housing for approval.

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<sup>1</sup>Inside the greenbelt nearly all the shoreline is in public ownership, outside, the public lands available for public access account for 6.8% of the shoreline.



3. Council implement Amendment 20 by adopting the following resolution "that the Council of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton adopt the attached explanatory text as Amendment 20 of the Official Plan of Ottawa-Carleton by a bylaw enacted under Section 13(2) of The Planning Act RSO 1970 Chapter 349".
4. Regional Council approve the report on operational policies.
5. Regional Council approve the report on land acquisition and management.



J.M. Wright  
Planning Commissioner



